

Unfinished

Interview with Verna Wilson

Dodson: I wonder Mrs. Wilson if you would give us your name and tell us how long you have lived here in Burbank.

Wilson: My name is Verna ...[?] Forbes Wilson and I've lived all my life which is 55 years.

Dodson: See, we didn't dare ask that. (laughs)

(laughter)

Wilson: I'm not ashamed. (laughing) I had the honor to have been born in the Burbank hospital which is still in business. ...[?] school. My daughter went to the same school and what else can I tell you.

Dodson: Well that gives us a little idea, so we've already found out that you well...[?] to speak on the history of Burbank as you've seen it develop over a half century then. We wonder if you could tell us something about your education here in Burbank, what schools you went to, maybe you remember the names of some of your teachers.

Wilson: Well, my kindergarten teacher was Mrs. Inaand that, I went to kindergarten up through the third grade in what is now the administration building within Luther Burbank School. Mrs. ...[?] is still living ...[?] My first grade teacher was Mrs. Pershing, Mrs. ...[?], Mrs. Clayton, I remember her definitely because she was the only person I saw wash a boys mouth out with soap.(laughs)

Dodson:(laughing) Now that's interesting, I don't think that's done at the present time.

Wilson: Well, she certainly got respect after that. The Edison School whcih is near, well we'll have to say Pic-N-Save, we always used to say Alexander's Market, Pic-N-Save is now. And at that time Edison School had been built on the remains of the original grammar school in Burbank and when we played hopscotch we would pick up these funny old fashioned square nails and use them for ...[?] in hopscotch, the things you throw. (laughs) And from there I went to John Muir Junior High which my daughter also attended but in a different building. John Muir moved and

Dodson: Where was John Muir at the time that you attended?

Wilson: Uh, gee, it was on Cypress, I keep getting mixed up, between Cypress and San Jose, Third and San Fernando Road. Kitty corner across from Burbank High School now. And it was partially wrecked during the '37 quake and that was the year I went to high

school and it was Burbank High, at that time we were having to fit two in one of these narrow seats because there weren't enough seats to go around because ...[?] was wrecked. (laughs) I went to Burbank High for ...[?] years, graduated there in '39.

Dodson: You mentioned the quake. Which one was that in particular? Was that the one we call the Long, the long Beach quake was earlier, wasn't it?

Wilson: That was the Long Beach quake.

Dodson: And it was felt this strongly in Burbank, that it wrecked building up here?

Wilson: It wrecked quite a bit of John Muir Junior High. In fact there was a third story at that time which was the art room, that was a nice studio, a real new studio and that was totally wrecked, had to be taken down ...[?] came down and the only part of the building that was open was the, how do I say it, the part towards the hill, the eastern section the two stories there. The rest was just a wreck. It was gradually that we refurbished it. Typically the [?] school was tents on the ground [?], quite interesting.

Dodson: Well, yes I'm glad to hear that because apparently in the Valley, further West, they felt it but it apparently didn't do too much damage. There's no accounting for what is damaged and what isn't in an earthquake.

Wilson: Well, I think the same reason that our house here sustained quite a bit of damage during this last, the '71 quake, the school, because it's on, what do you call it, [?] scarf [?], you know the land that washes off the mountains, it's really rock, it's rock and roll type. (laughs) Land out further, where you get into the flat plain here in Burbank which is old river bed, even in this last quake which was worse than ...[?] but there wasn't nearly as much damage.

Dodson: I think it does depend to a great degree on what sort of land your house is on, how much you are going to feel. Well, tell me about this elementary school experience. You mentioned hopscotch, that raises an interesting question. What else did you do for fun at that time?

Wilson: Ohhh, ohhh, well school (laughing)

Dodson: (laughs) I haven't heard the word hopscotch in a long time.

Wilson: School was really the only place I played because I didn't have children my own age around home, I was, my parents were quite elderly when I was born and all my cousins were older than I. So in school we played hopscotch, we played ...[?] Does that sound familiar?

Dodson: (laughing) No, I'm afraid not. ...[?] do these sound familiar to you? ...[?]

....[?]

Wilson: Baseball, it's softball I guess. Yeah, someone's chosen pitcher, catcher, and you go on down your with your competence, I always ended up in, far in the outer field. (laughing) And then whoever, if you catch a ball you get to take a turn at base, which I never managed to do, if you hit the ball and you manage to make all the bases you can stay up till you're out. The best ones always stayed up and the outfield always stayed out. (laughing) It was sort of a self defeating thing. We had, our school ground, in those days were all dirt, you know, it wasn't black top which ...[?] we played handball, we had handball courts, the boys usually played handball, we played ...[?] olly, olly, oxen free, you ever hear of that.

Dodson: Something familiar about that.

Wilson: You threw a ball over the top of the lunch counter, lunch ...[?], which is where we ate lunch and yelled that and everybody that could manage to get around where the ball pitcher was, was then free, I forget all the rest of the game. (laughs) But we had rings and we had slides, it was quite a nice playground, in fact it was a large playground. But funny thing for those days, boys and girls did not play intergrated games at all.

Dodson: No, I know, I remember that in my own elementary experience.

Wilson: We got out at different times of the day.

Dodson: Is that right?

Wilson: The girls were let out for recess when we went in the boys went out for recess, and they went in, (laughing), we had lunch together, but that's all. So we really didn't have much mingling. After school I would occasionally go to a girlfriend's house and we'd play with her brothers.

Dodson: Would you look back at it now, do you think that was better than our present system of more intergration?

Wilson: No, (laughing), I'm a [?]wild liberal [?], I'll tell you why, I ended up my career by being one of the few women ...[?] Lockheed. So I definitely believe in, (laughing) well intergrating [?]adult[?] women ...[?]I think it's much better this way, I like it. The only thing I disagree with the present education is I don't think they start the kids off reading, writing, and arithmetic quite soon enough and quite as ...[?] advanced ...[?] I took a first grade reader down to the third grade class at a parochial school and we were amazed because it was harder than the third grade reader.

Dodson: That right.

Wilson: Burbank's first grade reader.

Dodson: Now, you have a daughter in elementary school too. Comparing her education with yours, did you feel that you went faster than then she did?

Wilson: I believe that I did go faster because they expected more of us in reading, they expected more of us in many ways. We didn't have many of the opportunities, the outside opportunities that the children do now. We didn't go on field trips. Only thing we went on a field trip to was the Burbank ...[?] Shop. (laughing) But I believe that we were expected to be, you might say, ladies and gentlemen, we weren't supposed to be little brats and perhaps maybe expecting things of children, you get more if you expect more, although I think she ...[?] very well in school.

Dodson: You did feel that the discipline was stricter when you were in elementary school?

Wilson: (laughs) Oh yeah. Definitely, although I think it was more, well, the teacher got the whammy on you when you went in the first day, that's the best term I could use. The teacher's were backed up by the principal, the principal was backed up by the superintendent, and so on. However when I got to high school everything changed. ...[?] progressive education, and I don't think I learned very much in high school because when I got to ...[?] College I found there was an awful lot I didn't know. I learned most of my English grammar in first year French. (laughs) Just the basic stuff which I should have learned in high school. ...[?] evolved English grammar.

Dodson: In high school, what did you especially study? Do remember what sort of courses you were most interested in?

Wilson: Definitely, because I thought at that time I wanted to be a commercial artist and I would have gone on in that field if we [?] didn't have to move [?] But we didn't, we were very poor at that time. I really ...[?] all the art courses. I did take four years of Latin by going an extra half year to Burbank High after graduation before I entered Glendale College, course I graduated when I was just barely seventeen.

Dodson: Course I'm a little interested in that. I took four years of Latin myself plus some more in college. Did you read Virgil? Did you ...[?] Virgil then?

Wilson: We, uh, yes we got in to, you know, I can't remember anything, it's terrible, I can't remember it except that it helped me so much now in the meaning of words.

Dodson: uh-huh.

Wilson: Which, I believe, that was really the basic thing I got out of it, enjoying words as a, just enjoying words. Looking them up and seeing, and getting a hold of the dictionary, you can't put it down because you go on and on. But I had an excellent Latin teacher, Mrs. ...[?], I think she's the only Latin teacher they ever had at Burbank High, that I know of. She worked there until she practically was too old to work anymore. Uh we had also an excellent, um, what they'd call it in those days, social studies is what it was called when my daughter was in school, um, I can't think of it.

Dodson: They pro

Wilson: Excuse me.

Dodson: I was just gonna say they probably just called it History and Civics then, when you were in school.

Wilson: Oh, I think they may have lost the terminology, Ms. ...[?] was the teacher, and in those days, course Communism, you didn't even talk about it, she was quite a rebel, she brought us in books about Russia, that's the first time I ever really had a ...[?] in Moscow. And we learned many things that I'm afraid, if the high school principal had known we were learning them, he wouldn't have liked it. These are the things, I guess, progressive education in that way was good. But I really didn't learn the things I needed to go in to my field because I found out commercial art and then going in from that I, which I'd say, evolved into an engineering field, I found, gee, I should have taken a lot more math, they didn't make me take math (laughing). And so you had to learn all these things as you went in college. (laughs)

Dodson: So you took engineering courses at Glendale College then, did you?

Wilson: I took, um, but I had to go to work, so I never even graduated from Glendale College, I went to high school, started work at Lockheed ...[?] '42 and quit in '46, went back in '51 and just retired.

Dodson: Now I think you're the first lady we've interviewed who worked at Lockheed during the war. So I'm interested in knowing what it was like to work there during the war.

Wilson: It was noisy. (Laughs) I was one of the first two women in this department. In 1942 ...[?] had some bombers, it was department ten ...[?] My job involved a crawling inside, the first job I had, crawling inside of the Bombay and ...[?] rivets, all night. And when I came home the first night I couldn't hear. (laughs) So it was a very interesting experience. I worked all the time during the war in production, I was building airplanes, I finally got to work with the ...[?], which ...[?] installer, electrical, I mean, mechanical installer. And I quit and got

married and when I went back, this is funny, I have to tell you this. ...[?] I was working at the PXPTVU1, the first patrol, made patrol bomber, when I went back, I went back on the PTVU1, same boss, same job, same place in the plant, physical spot in the plant, as if I'd never been gone. (everyone laughs).

Dodson: How did the men accept you as a woman worker when you first went into the plant?

Wilson: They were very nice because they treated me like I was their child (laughing). They were very much the gentlemen, most of them were older, I was ...[?] I went to work. I looked very young for my age, I pig tails (laughs) and they were extremely nice. I never felt out of place but of course, I guess that was because I had always, my father always wanted a boy and my two older brothers had died as tiny babies so I always got to work with daddy. ...[?] cars and we had a ranch and it was a working ranch, ...[?] we raised flowers and when you raise flowers you work very hard. (laughs) So I usually spent, I go home from school and put on dirty clothes, work out in the yard and it meant getting on the back of a truck ...[?] or things like that. So I was used to being around men and I think that made a big difference, I really do.

Dodson: I didn't know whether they might show any jealousy of a woman in that type of work or not. But you never encountered anything like that.

Wilson: The only place I ever encountered it was when I started making as much money as they did (laughs) and it was really not a jealous ...[?] in fact I've had, later on, I've had men who working, you might say, under me or with me and directed their work and there's never been a problem but I think that really ...[?] approach it. You just forget that there are differences really and don't expect too much. A lot of women expect to be carried around on a ...[?] (laughs)

....: Mrs. Wilson, maybe you could tell us some more about your family history ...[?] farther into the interview.

Wilson: Right, and that's why I brought all my little goodies ...[?]. My dad came to Burbank in 1907 and his brother. They had a really interesting trip to Burbank because in the course of coming from Illinois, they came from Illinois where he was born, they were ...[?] to Iowa ...[?] to Mexico where they both were cowboys. From New Mexico they, this is all in a period of about eight years I would say, he came to Yuma, Arizona and by covered wagon, would you believe.

Dodson: Is that right?

Wilson: And the brother and his wife and my dad who was then unmarried and the three little children, one niece and two nephews made this trip. I think it took them about a month which

you can drive today in one day. (laughter) And that brother happened to have been Burbank's second mayor, Charles John Forbes.

Dodson: Well, were glad to get that all recorded. (laughs)

Wilson: (laughing) Right, my dad was Burbank city trustee, that was a councilman in those days, of course they work for nothing, it was free. Get that on tape too. (laughs) And my mother happened to would have been Burbank's city clerk. They were both elected the same year, 1914, she was hired in nineteen, I believe it was 1913 and then was elected in fourteen and February 14, 1914 she resigned this was before she was elected because she said that, I think I'll read through it ...[?].

Dodson: Yes go ahead.

Wilson: I ...[?] my resignation ...[?] white water department city clerk, and city clerk as I do not feel called upon to bear the burdens and neglected duties of former clerks of the city, nor to accept the books of said clerks without first getting an audit as requested. Regarding the other departments I did not feel called upon to straighten out a system of books and then soon place them in the hands of another party. Another thing I wish to call to your attention is the fact that I have not once since taking the position of the clerk of the white water department received my salary until one or two or even three weeks after said salary was due. I therefore feel justified in asking your honorable body to release me from said duties (laughs) at once. Yours Truly, Emily M. Patton.

I think that prompted them (laughs) to encourage her to run for city clerk when she was elected (laughing). I forgot my dad came with ...[?] fourteen dollars ...[?]. After he resigned as city trustee or didn't run anymore, at that time he became city street superintendent. ...[?] a picture of him, driving the city's first ...[?] truck and he also, he was somewhat of a mechanic ...[?] and he installed I think the first pair of dual rear wheels on a city truck that were ever on any city trucks, he just ...[?] them up and put them on there.

Dodson:[?] What year was this date from? [?]

Wilson: Well, they were first elected in 1914, the truck I would say dates about 1918 probably. ...[?] nomination papers ...[?], yeah 1914. My mother, in fact my dad had an earlier wife than my mother who died in 1917 in childbirth, so my mother and he were rather sitting on romance, they married in 1918, they'd known each other just on account of my dad's first wife for all those years. So anyways, she resigned in 1918 or I think it was 1919 from city clerk and I was born in '21 and she never worked again. (laughs) But my father then, this is the house he built for us, ...[?] I lived there until we moved out of it, in fact, we moved out of it cause we couldn't pay the taxes (laughs) on it in the ...[?]. But this would be ...[?] where the Generator Plant is

right now .

Dodson: I see. So the house isn't standing at the present time?

Wilson: No, it was torn down. He was a carpenter, he was quite a good carpenter and he built it himself, that was on the corner of Lake and Olive. Oh, I have to tell you one other thing that he built. The very fancy keyhole-shaped, Moorish type ...[?] that are in the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. He built the design and built the frame, the ...[?] for them, uh-huh. He also was the carpenter on the Masonic Temple, the original Masonic Temple, in Hollywood and I'm not sure, I think it was that job or one where he was working in the theater ...[?] he fell, he was up 20 feet on a scaffold and another man swung a timber around and it fell and broke his arms and had a concussion, so he was never able to work as a carpenter after that. So at that point when he was too injured to do that type of work he retired as janitor, custodian here in Burbank for Burbank City Schools and worked there until his death. He died in '46, he was 74 so he could work ...[?] job, he was very old. And I would say in all that time he had possibly one paid vacation because they didn't have vacations, they didn't have sick leave. In 1930's our family, which was five adults or four adults and myself were living on his pay of \$75.00 a week, a month, I'm sorry.

Dodson: I was going to ask you if you remembered what his pay was.

Wilson: Very definitely. (laughing)

Dodson: ...[?]

Wilson: ...[?] grandmother and grandfather and mother and dad and I ...[?] (laughs) ...[?] in Burbank in those days.

Dodson: Yes. Perhaps you remember the depression and how it affected you?

Wilson: Definitely, at that time we had to move ...[?] home ...[?] my grandfather, it was on the same property and that was Lot 2, Block 88 of your providencial ...[?] track. (laughs)

Dodson: That certainly places it. (laughing)

Wilson: ...[?] was just as you come over the Olive Ave. over pass to the Golden State Freeway, it's right at the base of that over pass on the left side, on the North. ...[?] and we lived in a little house behind him and he ran the city dump. ...[?] \$15 dollars a month or something like that.

Dodson: Oh my.

Wilson: But it was wonderful because we accumulated a lovely library. The one thing, Oh grandpa was quite a reader, I'll tell

you about grandpa. Everything that we discarded he would go through in the libraries and the schools and everything and we accumulated two volumes of Les Misarables, oh quite a large library of all sorts ...[?] (laughing) In other words, we benefitted and it wasn't really, in those days people did not look down, you know, because you had hard times, everybody was having hard times, you know, so it was expected. Oh let's get back to grandpa (laughs). Grandpa had about, oh, five years of formal schooling. He was born right after the Civil War, I believe it was 1867, his father died shortly there after as a result of being ...[?] And grandpa was one of the ...[?] out children, did you ever hear that term?

....: I'm not familiar with it.

Dodson: Not from that period, no. There were sort of indentured servants, they called them, in a much earlier period. But perhaps you could tell us what this means for the period we talked about?

Wilson: Well this is in Indiana and at that time, his mother, of course had had three sons, his mother was unable to support them because they had very small pension for Civil War widows. So the sons all ...[?] to ...[?] Grandpa was six, they were six, five, and four, I believe at the time. Grandpa and his younger brother were bound out to farmers, to work for their board and keep, you know, clothing and he, his room was usually in a hayloft or something like that, they didn't give him the best of anything. So he would go to school when he could, when they didn't need him to work. He was pretty bright and you know I think he was probably very high IQ, so he read a lot, everything he got a chance to read and when he was, oh I would say about sixteen, his uncle had started what was called the Morengo(?) Academy in Indiana, southern Indiana, which was the first integrated school in Indiana that I know of, totally integrated, women, men, and colored people we call them now. And, so Grandpa was bright, his uncle noticed it and he was ...[?] and he could get this boy to work for him cheap, so Grandpa started working there as a teacher of all things. (laughs) He was teaching people as old or older than himself and Grandpa was interested enough that he eventually got himself to read Greek enough to, uh, study Botany which was his lifelong love, and he was a nursery lover -- he was a florist and a florist in those days was quite an artist. So, that's where he met my grandmother, my grandmother had, in ...[?] had a greenhouse, he ... [?] they married and they came out to California because my mother was ill, and in those days the warm climate was the cure. They brought my mother out here, and Grandpa had a nursery in Burbank ...[?]

Dodson: When did he arrive in Burbank, now?

Wilson: They arrived here in 1910, in, I think it was May of 1910.

Dodson: I have one question you mentioned.....(end of tape)

Dodson: Now you were going to tell us about your grandmother's family?

Wilson: Yes, my mother's grandfather was German, he came over to the United States in about 1820. He came on the same boat as the builder of the Brooklyn Bridge by the way and was a personal friend of his. Anyway he became a tin smith, silver smith, and he made the models for the brewery, the models ...[?] eventually but they had to go to the patent office in Washington, had to take models of everything you made in these days. Well anyways, he set up shop in Louisville, Kentucky in 1835 and in the Civil War he was too old to go but in the Civil War he had southern ...[?] so while the southern forces were around he was making guns for the south, when the northern troops got to town, my grandmother, great-grandmother hid him in the cellar under a pile of coal, they in 1862 and he hid away there but he would go out there in the night to the northern soldiers, keep them happy and they never inquired where grandpa was, so he was kind of a, I don't know what you'd call him. (laughing) He was supporting both sides. In those days Germans in Louisville were not really accepted, they were, they looked down you. It was racial prejudice, it sounds very strange but the funny thing is grandpa ...[?] grandpa because my mother did, became an altar boy in Louisville and he represented the German part. Now they actually had a German part of town, you know, it's the ...[?] and then of course he was very well accepted in the later days but in the early days there was quite a great deal of prejudice.

Dodson: Of course I have to put in, although it has no connection with what we're doing that my grandmother's family was also from Kentucky and of course they were pro-southern in the Civil War and my great-grandfather was captured very early in the war and spent the rest of the war in a northern prison.

Wilson: ...[?]

Dodson: Oh he did, there was a tradition in the family that every once in awhile they'd be able to catch a fat rat and have meat

Wilson: (laughing) Oh dear!

Dodson: We hear so many theories about how the southerners treated their prisoners, we don't hear the stories about how the northerners did it and they didn't have any excuse because they had plenty of food but they weren't sharing it with southern prisoners. The conditions were horrible in northern prisons.

Wilson: I'm sure they were because I think there was a great deal of just plain prejudice. We really don't know, we can't except how much ...[?] should mention that great-grandfather ...[?] an officer, ...[?] he spent thirty days in prison. The ...[?] private was in there, was over a year and in the end they were trading buttons off the uniforms through the prison gate to

civilians for food (laughs). Now he lived until 1904 but he never moved ...[?] quite fragile, he fathered eight children (laughing) so I guess he was

Dodson: Wasn't too fragile.

Wilson: (laughs) We're getting way away from Burbank but it does really tie into

Dodson: Sort of the antecedents (?) of Burbank, we can put it that way. All of you have any more questions along this line?

...[?]: No, ...[?].

Dodson: That's the first time I've had a chance to say what the Northerners did to us Southerners during the war. (laughs)

...[?]: ...[?] Let's see, your mother's family came to Burbank in 1910 then and your father's came later than that

Wilson: Earlier.

...[?]: Earlier than that, but with his brother right?

Dodson: Can you tell us what sort of social life you had here in Burbank as a teenager?

Wilson: Very little really because as a teenager, of course, I was having to help on the family ranch, farm, whatever you say. We raised fruit and ...[?] flowers ...[?] And that meant cutting off your skirt getting right out there and working and don't ever let anybody talk you into buying ...[?] to raise in your yard because they're very hard, you have to, what they call, ...[?] each one, that means going through the ...[?] this was one of my jobs.

Dodson: Is that because they don't grow naturally here in the Valley or would that be true anywhere that ...[?] are raised?

Wilson: That would be true anywhere they're raised course which is why you probably won't see any, very rarely, in today's market, chrysanthimums have taken their place cause they're alot easier to raise. (laughs) ...[?] are beautiful, my mother loved them and she raised them and babied them and I think the ...[?] raising them. The fruit farm was quite ...[?]. That's where I learned to make change at the age of about six. (laughter).

Dodson: What sort of fruit did you raise primarily?

Wilson: Um, apricots and peaches and plums. In fact one of the big crops in the whole valley ...[?] was apricots. The ...[?] apricots, if you ever learned to say it apricots. There were just acres and acres from here to Van Nuys that I remember driving through and when we'd run out we'd go out there and buy from them

King of Spain in the 18th century.

Wilson: ...[?] (laughing) But I'm not sure that when we bought the, when my dad bought this portion of ...[?] track that the water rights didn't go with it but I ...[?] noticed on the deed that they were excluded and I've always been told that if they're not excluded you get them. But apparently it was an overall exclusion.

Dodson: Maybe it varies from state to state. In some states the water rights are entirely separate from the other surface land use.

Wilson: I think that may be true of Los Angeles, I'm not certain. But one of the most exciting things I should mention before I forget, exciting, (laughing), scary things. When I was first, first starting to work at Lockheed, the water tank that the city had put up right where they drilled this well. One day was crashed into by one of the planes that I had been working on, it was a P38 ...[?] and I think possibly two, two city employees were killed. This was right on ...[?] my mother was at home, my dad and I both were at swing shift, at that time my mother and grandfather were home alone. My the time I got home at midnight my mother had still not stopped shaking. (laughs) But it was, you know, rather hushed up. There wasn't much about it in the paper. It was a very, VERY frightening thing. (laughs) I just want to bring that up because I think it's the scariest thing of my whole life (laughing) in Burbank. But as far as the social life there really, for the people who didn't have too much ...[?] there wasn't much social life. You worked. In fact I went to work ...[?] 16, cleaning houses on weekends (laughs) and then I worked for my ...[?] called him uncle, he was a brother-in-law of this Uncle Charlie who was the mayor of Burbank, Uncle Charlie's second wife who was ...[?], Dr. Thompson, Dr. ...[?] Thompson was her brother, he always treated me like a ...[?] and nephews. So I went to work for him as a receptionist at his office when I was 17 and I worked there and I guess the hours just astound people. Now I worked there, ah, let's see, how could you say this, out of 2 weeks I worked 13 days. (laughs)

Dodson: That expresses it quite well, that would be 13 out of 14. (laughs)

Wilson: And at the same time I was going to Glendale College and I worked after school. Went to school half the day and went there after school until about, office hours were 6:00pm and working all day Saturday and all day every other Sunday. For that I got \$18.00 a week (laughing) So things were really that ...[?] today ...[?] young people, ...[?] They can't believe ...[?] just that short time ago. That was in 1930's, late 1930's.

Dodson: Of course, I think we were accustomed to getting along on much less than many people now would deem necessary. I didn't possess a car until after I got my master's degree in college

to sell here ...[?] clientel. Peaches ...[?] about the same time as apricots ...[?] you would have them much later and people don't know but there are many varieties of peaches, many varieties of apricots ...[?] you don't know that anymore, you don't see them on the market. But some ...[?] two years. This lovely acreage that we had is where, again, where the steam plant is now.

Dodson: I was going to ask you where the acreage was.

Wilson: Right. And right behind us was, it was called the pumping plant in those days, THE pumping plant, ...[?] in Burbank. We didn't have our own well. Our next door neighbor had his own well and they were pumping fifteen feet. (laughing) I remember my grandfather having a cesspool put down cause we didn't have sewers and they hit water at 12 feet and that's as far as it could go.

Dodson: Is that right? Then there was no water problem in the Burbank area at that time?

Wilson: There wasn't up even as late as 1940's because in 1940, I think it was 2 or 3, they, the city put down a deep well right behind us, in fact I think it's still there, it's still ...[?] the City of Los Angeles (laughing).

Dodson: I've heard you've say they wouldn't have any right to take water out of it even if they had it, would they?

Wilson: That was interesting because it came in as an ...[?] well. It just spouted out and at that time city let us go back with buckets and take all the water we wanted. We went out there and got, and it was delicious, lovely soft water, and we understood that this, what they had done, they had even gone down below, you see the LA River, there's a large underground river, most of it's underground.

Dodson: Yes.

Wilson: Well they had gone through, they got water that water, then they had gone through the base of the LA River down into the deep water so it's ...[?]. I think there's still some argument about whether we should be allowed to take deeper water or not.

Dodson: I think the court recently rendered a decision that all the water in the Los Angeles River belongs to the City of Los Angeles.

Wilson: Unfortunately, I think that, well of course the, what do you call it? The ...[?] the group of judges which make this decision ...[?]. But anyway I think there are some people that are still arguing that.

Dodson: Well I think the decision was based on the grant by the

(laughing). Now I don't have a single student without a car.
(laughs)

Wilson: That's right. We had a 1924 Chevy that my dad used for everything from hauling sand by the tons ...[?] to ...[?] passenger car. That was the only thing we owned up until 1937. Then we bought, he was getting real ...[?], then he bought a '37 Chevreolet, I mean a '34 Chevreolet in 1937 but our biggest purchase in all those years was a tractor, we bought a ...[?] tractor which was probably 1921 model and it was used, we used it to plow our field which was an acre, by the way our ...[?] were one acre ...[?]. I was able to drive it but I never could turn the corners with it, it was too hard to turn, so my dad always had to turn the corners. (laughs) I think it took us a whole year to pay for it, it cost \$100, second hand. (laughs)

Dodson: It's a little hard looking back on those things now to realize that.

Wilson: But that tractor, for the \$100 that we paid, we sold it for scrap after my dad died, and we sold it for scrap for \$25. And with the \$25 I bought my, practically, my (?)trousseau(?). I bought two blankets, a set of towels and washcloths, we still have the two blankets (laughter).

Dodson: (laughs) They've worn well!

Wilson: And a set of ...[?] of stainless steel which we still use as cutlery, so I think we really made our monies worth out of that tractor. (laughs)

Dodson: I'm tempted to ask if you remember how much it cost you for your daughter to get married, for comparative purposes.

Wilson: Oh my, I think it cost about 4 times that just for the reception. (laughs) ...[?] reception, incidentally, she received a ...[?] so we're not allowed to, us if weren't one, were not allowed to go to the wedding, so that didn't cost us anything, so that was nice but unfortunately she had two receptions, one in ...[?] Idaho and one out here in Burbank, so we had two receptions to pay for plus the transportation I won't even add up how much it was.

Dodson: (Laughing) Times have certainly changed, have they.

Wilson: Her schooling was a little more expensive than mine too because I think the only thing I ever really had to pay, what you might call true tuition for were some extension classes at UCLA ...[?]. So my college education, and those advanced, you know, uhhh, advanced math classes. My college education didn't cost as much as maybe her first year of high school and, you know, really people though, don't understand that you can still ...[?] without a lot of the things that people take for granted. I made soap, I would make my own soap, I make all the soap that we use for

everything.

Dodson: I can remember my mother used to do that.

Wilson: Well, most people don't do that now but we find it better than what we can buy. ...[?] washer 1935, I'm going to keep it because it's an antique.

Dodson: One of these days you'll contribute it to the Burbank Museum, probably.

Wilson: That's right and I should say ...[?] museum ...[?] will be going into the Burbank Museum.

Dodson: Well, it would be delighted to have something like that I can assure you.

Wilson: Well that's, I would say that's 1880 and it's had an interesting life, I should mention the other great-grandfather. I have more evidence of his existence (laughing). He was a furniture manufacturer in Louisville, in fact, his shop, his building was taken over by ...[?] gone broke ...[?], his name was Ram...[?] and I don't think ...[?] (laughs) But he was quite a well known ...[?] 1850's through the 1890's. So we've had quite an interesting background ...[?] the family. Why we ended up in Burbank is per chance I'd say.

Dodson: ...[?] that's probably true. A great many people who came out, out here and then sort of wound up by accident where ever they did wind up. Well, can you tell us anything about [?]religious[?] life in the Valley when you were in your teens.

Wilson: Well,

Dodson: Or in Burbank perhaps I should say to make it specific.

Wilson: Well, I shouldn't admit this but when I was little my grandpa and grandma they were very, very good church-goers, Grandpa and Grandma Payton, it was John Payton ...[?] Payton. Grandpa sang in the [?]Methodist[?] Choir, he was very active. My mother and dad were not. My dad was raised by a nice little ...[?] [?]Methodist[?] Church ...[?] and I guess it turned him against church going. He really, he was always the ...[?] of the family in that respect (laughing). So my remembrance of the, of my church life was being bribed to go to Sunday School.(laughs) But I think it was because I was afraid to go downstairs. I had a horror of steps in those days (laughs) and Methodist Sunday School was downstairs for the children. So my church life in those days was extremely ...[?] that those who did, church life is quite strict, in fact, the ...[?] you didn't work on a Sunday, it was just not done. Stores and things were not open on Sunday.

Dodson: Would that be true then of Burbank that most things were closed on Sunday or practically all of them?

Wilson: As I recall, yes, in fact, I think it would have been a scandal probably, you know, for the stores to be open. Burbank is a very staid town, up until the late 30's, it was very, very proper (laughing) and people, oh I don't know, they were just very prim and proper, it was probably like a mid-west town because I think most of the people were mid-western.

Dodson: Now with places like pharmacies, for instance, would be open on Sunday or would they be closed too?

Wilson: